

# THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION JAN 6 1947

Vol. VIII—No. 9

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY — BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

Durham, December, 1946

## Do They Speak, Read, and Write Well?

A recent survey of state departments of public instruction, of 165 school systems, and of 79 colleges, shows that high school and college teachers of English agree students do not read, speak or write well. Teachers in high schools state that heavy teaching schedules and extra curricular duties as well as the lack of an articulated program make it impossible for them to do the kind of professional job they feel is necessary.

Answers to a questionnaire sent to administrators and teachers of English came from large and small high schools in thirty-one states; college reports, from forty states; and departments of public instruction reports, from fourteen states. Although these reports show confusion in objectives and a deplorable lack of understanding between groups, as well as between the philosophy expressed in the courses of study and that practiced in the class rooms, there is a profound conviction of administrators, high school teachers, and college professors that students today do not speak understandingly or write well.

The greatest confusion seems to exist in state departments of public instruction. Nine have undertaken no studies in articulation and seem to know of no such programs in their states; yet articulation programs conducted by the state universities have been accepted by the schools in those states and have received national recognition. One state superintendent of public instruction said that the articulation program in his state took no cognizance of the elementary school in making its plans; yet that state's *Guide to the Language Arts Program* affirms "The Language Arts program should be conceived as a continuous articulated whole from kindergarten through the twelfth grade."

Two hundred junior and senior high schools answered the questionnaire, one hundred sixty-five in twenty-seven states, completely. Eighty report no articulation program with elementary schools or

(Continued on page 6, column 1)

## Washington Meeting

Time: 6:00 p.m., December 29, 1946

Place: Burlington Hotel, 1120 Vermont Ave., N.W. Just off Thomas Circle.

Program: Dinner, and Discussion of "Training Desirable for Teachers of College English."

Speakers: Fred B. Millett, Wesleyan University; Theodore Spencer, Harvard University; Austin Warren, State University of Iowa.

## Virginia Meeting

Eighty-eight representatives from twenty-one colleges participated in the annual meeting of the Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina division of the College English Association on November 2 at Washington and Lee University.

Clifford P. Lyons, of the University of North Carolina, presided over the morning session effectively in the double role of participator and moderator of a symposium discussion on "English Fundamentals—How and When?" Mabel Davidson, of Randolph Macon Woman's College, spoke of composition as the "step-child of the curriculum" and pled for greater emphasis on trained and sympathetic direction of student writing. Archibald Currie Jordan, of Duke University, countered with a documented defense of the study of grammar on a college level. Using established textbooks of composition as examples, he

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## Why Not Junior Members?

Founded to promote good English teaching in colleges, CEA must always welcome cordially all who share those interests. In his letter printed below, Professor Wheeler proposes that Junior or Affiliate Memberships be made available to interested undergraduates, and certainly graduate students as well. The opinion of officers and directors was general favorable, as the excerpts which follow Professor Wheeler's letter illustrate. If the Washington meeting approves, a definite proposal will be submitted to the members.

Dear Mr. Fitzhugh:

I have postponed replying to your letter of October 29 until I could consult with the group of seniors who are doing major work in English and who constitute the club which is interested in affiliating itself with the College English Association.

This organization has as its purposes the following:

- 1—"To acquaint ourselves with current literature and happenings in the literary field.
- 2—"To integrate the efforts of all those who are interested in the improvement of the instruction of English.
- 3—"To sponsor projects which will benefit other college students as well as members of the club."

The members of the club have requested me to say to you that they wish to ascertain whether

(Continued on page 4, column 1)

## Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate of officers for the College English Association in 1947:

President ..... Odell Shepard  
Vice-Presidents .....

Helen C. White, University of Wisconsin  
George F. Reynolds, University of Colorado, Emeritus

Directors .....

Theodore Spencer, Harvard University, to replace Milton Ellis, resigned.

T. M. Pearce, University of New Mexico  
Mark Van Doren, Columbia University\*

A. V. Hall, University of Washington  
John E. Hankins, University of Kansas

Burges Johnson, Chairman

\*The retiring president becomes a director for three years automatically.

A postal card ballot is enclosed with this issue of the NEWS LETTER. Members who wish may leave their ballots with the Secretary at the Washington meeting.

## Composition Program

(Professor Gates letter which follows was in reply to one from the editor requesting a description of his composition program at Penn. State, and suggestions of ways in which the training of graduate students in composition might be strengthened.)

Dear Mr. Fitzhugh:

You ask me to do two things: (I) To describe the operation of the composition program at The Pennsylvania State College, and (II) to outline some procedures for training graduate students to write and to teach writing courses. The first is so broad that I hardly know where you want the emphasis placed; so I shall outline there also. The second request demands committee investigation and deliberation, but I shall try to make some suggestions, not only about graduate study but also about interests and aptitudes.

1. Our composition program consists of three parts, each more or less independent of the others but all mutually related: (1) service courses required of all entering freshmen and advanced or specialized courses required in a given curriculum of a given school; (2) specialized courses offered to "majors" in English Composition and elective to other upper classmen; (3) graduate courses leading to the Master of Arts degree.

1. All entering freshmen must schedule and pass a full year's work in English Composition—Engl. Comp. 1 and 2, or 5. Before they are accepted into Engl. Comp. 1, they must pass our Placement Test or a subfreshman non-credit course which meets three times a week. Before the war 16 to 18 percent of the entering freshmen were required to schedule the subfreshman course; in the fall of 1945 (the latest year of freshmen classes on our campus) 36 percent had to take the course. In spite of that increase, however, no one has advocated the lowering of standards.

Students who earn exceptionally high scores in the Placement Test are exempt from the first semester requirement; all others in the upper quarter of the class are assigned to superior sections.

The first-semester course con-

(Continued on page 2, column 1)

## THE NEWS LETTER

**Editor**  
ROBERT T. FITZHUGH  
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**Associate Editor**  
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Howard Lowry, College of Wooster (1948)  
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E. K. Brown, Univ. of Chicago (1949)  
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S. M. Pitcher, State Univ. of Iowa (1949)  
Odell Shepard (1949)

Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, \$2.00 a year. Subscription for Libraries, \$1.50.

## Opinion Requested

There is no thought of changing the tone or content of the Association's publication, nor is it essential to change the title. But a saving of something more than \$100 a year would result if the publication could qualify for second class postal rates, and the saving will increase as the Association grows. Unfortunately, according to the postal authorities, no paper with "Letter" in the title is now permitted second class rates.

Last spring when this circumstance was first put before the members, all opinion received by the Secretary favored changing the title and saving money, but a mixed response has greeted suggestions for a new title, although no proposal has developed vigorous opposition or support. THE CEA CRITIC was suggested as brief, easily identifiable with the Association, and descriptive. It does have an Eighteenth Century flavor, but no more than NEWS LETTER, and it might serve as a graceful reminder that our counsels should be witty, reasonable, and well-informed. Will the members please take advantage of space on the ballot enclosed with this issue to express their opinion on this matter?

The Association has almost doubled its paid-up membership during 1946.

## The Editorial Digest

A new monthly magazine, *The Editorial Digest*, will make its initial appearance with the December, 1946 issue. Address: 43 E. Ohio St., Chicago 11, Ill.

The editor is John Drury, for twenty years a feature writer on *The Chicago Daily News* and more recently conductor of a weekly radio program over Station WMAQ.

The new magazine will offer, each month, a well balanced selection of the nation's best newspaper editorials, reprinted in full.

## Types of Reading And Writing—II

I should like to continue my discussion of "Types of Reading and Writing" (begun in the September NEWS LETTER), since this comes close to the heart of the issue on which the Curriculum Committee requested comment (in the May NEWS LETTER): How would the Freshman-Sophomore course serve the needs of students in technical schools. What I have suggested, in essence, is that the chief weakness of the proposed course is its extreme emphasis on the aesthetic, "poetic" aspects of reading (and hence, by implication, of writing).

First, however, I should apologize for my casual "of course" with respect to the composition course, for which I was so gracefully scolded by Professor Foerster (October NEWS LETTER). I had no intentions of prejudging the issue, but simply meant to imply that the "elementary principles of grammar and rhetoric" (which I related to "principles of logic and criticism") still can be, and need to be, taught. As Professors J. C. Vaughan and E. C. McClintock, of the University of Virginia, put it so well: "The Foerster Report and the College English Association should advance the standards, not of literature only, but also of composition and rhetoric" (October NEWS LETTER).

Two other points with respect to my suggestions seem to require further clarification. Of course, when I suggested that the reading be broadened to include great books in the natural and social sciences and in criticism, I was thinking in terms of the proposed two-year course. Only a maker of omnibus text-books would dream of telescoping the humanistic tradition of western civilization into one year's reading!

On the writing, I was not proposing "a writing course based on models," at least not in the crude

(Continued on page 4, column 1)

## COMPOSITION PROGRAM . . .

(Continued from page 1, column 4)

phasizes matters of detail—diction, sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, paragraphing, and related matters. The second-semester courses emphasize the discovery and understanding of factual material and its organization for presentation to other adult minds. Thus we try to give the students a well-rounded training; occasionally at least, we are successful.

Immediately after the Placement Test in the fall, the names of the students placing in the upper quarter of the test scores are sent to the high school principals concerned; an appropriate, congratulatory letter accompanies the notice. In the spring after all grades have been compiled, a complete report is made to the high schools; this report includes a statement of specific reasons for individual unsatisfactory grades.

2. Students who major in English Composition meet the standard requirement for all majors in the School of the Liberal Arts, 24 to 36 credits (usually 36 or more in our department); but we allow no one to schedule all such course credits in writing; about one half must be taken in allied courses in literature. Thus a student who wants training in dramatic writing must take courses in dramatic literature, our theory being that no one writes well in a vacuum. Five major divisions are available, from which the student must choose three: Drama, Literary Criticism and Stylistics, Narrative, Non-fiction, and Poetry. Courses in the English language are also available.

3. Courses leading to the Master of Arts degree consist of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern Rhetoric and Poetic; Early and Modern English Prose Style; Semantics, English Grammar, Historical Grammar, Anglo-Saxon, Middle English (the last two in the Department of English Literature), Germanic and Romance Philology (in the German or Romance Language Departments), studies in the Rhetorical Techniques of such special forms of writing as humor, satire, and propaganda. Customarily we require two of the preceding, Ancient Rhetoric and Anglo Saxon. Otherwise the student works out his program in consultation with his adviser or committee; every student must schedule some courses in literature, usually about one third. The thesis must be written on a rhetorical, philological, or stylistic subject.

Such a program does not ap-

peal to all, but for the studious student who also has ink in his blood it does provide a background of information and understanding, a sense of the historical past of writing and of its modern manifestations.

The faculty to administer the three programs outlined above is a separate faculty, distinct from the faculties of English Literature (including Dramatics), Journalism, and Speech. Though open to other but, in general, minor objections, the separation of English Composition from English Literature here has resulted in attracting and developing career teachers of writing. They may and do attain the highest ranks and the highest salaries. Their classes are small, often limited to fifteen students and seldom exceeding twenty. Although the bulk of the teaching load is normally provided by about 1500 freshmen, an additional 1000 are usually enrolled in advanced or specialized courses; the result is that the departmental faculty enjoys a fair variety of classroom teaching. Most of them also continue in creative writing, productive scholarship, or preparation of textbooks; some few are assigned to administrative or semi-administrative activities. It is a generally accepted principle here that the teacher who limits his intellectual activity to the classroom is likely to lose his enthusiasm for it, and that the productive scholar or creative writer is always numbered among the more successful teachers.

II. Before trying to answer your  
(Continued on next page)

## New Freshman Text an Immediate Success ASSIGNMENTS IN EXPOSITION By LOUISE E. RORABACHER Purdue University

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second question on the training of prospective teachers of writing, I should like to make two general observations on the whole subject, observations which are likely to be uncontested in theory but ignored in practice. Just as all teachers of English, especially teachers of literature, should like to read, so certainly no teacher of composition should instinctively shun the task of writing; in fact, he should have demonstrated both interest and ability. A second general principle is that the professional future of a composition teacher should be as assured and secure as that of any other teacher. If the inherent interest is not in him, and if he has never taken the pains to prove at least potential ability, he should not attempt to teach others how to write. If he meets this first requirement but sees all doors shut to his professional advancement, no college or university can condemn him for neglecting his composition classes and trying by all means (including the political) to get his foot through some other door. In short, our colleges cannot expect to develop good teachers of writing so long as discrimination in salary and rank continues.

With few exceptions, the teacher of writing can profit from the traditional graduate training; it gives him that sense of the past which orients the present. Advanced study of both Germanic and Romance philology, literature, literary history and criticism, and comparative literature is grist to his mill, as it is conventionally accepted to be for the prospective teacher of literature. Of these, philology and criticism may well be emphasized for the college teacher of writing. In addition and somewhat outside the ordinary training of the Ph.D. in English, he ought to know Ancient and Renaissance rhetoric somewhat intimately, the historical development of English prose styles, and scientific methods of analysing contemporary prose styles. All of this graduate training will in itself, however, produce no successful teacher of writing, unless he himself first possess a genuine interest in writing and a further genuine interest in college students as human beings. In fact, some who have possessed this double interest, and who have also found professional advancement possible, have succeeded with only the A.B. degree to their academic credit.

Yours very truly,

Theodore J. Gates  
Head of the Department  
of English Composition  
Pennsylvania State College

## I've Been Reading Appointment Bureau

Members are invited to contribute to reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Baker is now Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, New Jersey.

### R. W. Chambers on Coriolanus

If one of the characteristics of literary criticism is to enrich the understanding of the readers of a work of literature, then R. W. Chambers's chapter on "The expression of ideas" in *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* (Cambridge, 1923) contains some of the best criticism of *Coriolanus* that I know. For here the critic reveals to us an interpretation of the parts which the mob and Marcius play which makes the drama a fuller representation of the relation of man to man and of man to men than it was as explained by earlier critics.

Though this interpretation is but one part of his paper, the purpose of which is to show the parallels in the expression of ideas between Shakespeare's works and the famous 147 lines, it is an important part and one likely to be overlooked in the controversy over Shakespeare's authorship of these lines. Professor Chambers shows at once that "it is the foolish good-nature of the citizens which tempts Coriolanus to his destruction" and that "between the headstrong temper of Marcius, and the venomous malice of the tribunes, who deliberately play upon that temper, the citizens are as helpless as Othello in the toils of Iago." Chambers makes his case for his interpretation by a close examination of the text. But he also gets at what he considers the author's intended meaning through a comparison of the play with others in the canon and with Shakespeare's source.

Shakespeare, he points out, in wholly appreciating the "strongly contrasted qualities" of his mobs—and we might well add his heroes and his villains—"has thereby puzzled generations of critics." In this instance they "cannot conceive it possible that a man should, at the same time, laugh at the crowd and love it," and their brotherhood includes Hazlitt, Bagehot, Dowden, Lee, Raleigh, Schelling, Massfield, Brandes, Tolstoi, and Shaw. Misinterpretations such as theirs have made *Coriolanus* an underrated play. Chambers shows us more in it than they found. To do this he elucidates the text, he shows a meaning which they did not find. And when this meaning has been recovered, the play be-

The tentative fee of \$3.00 announced last December for registration in the Appointment Bureau will be continued. Members are reminded that the Bureau offers them an inexpensive and dignified way of finding more remunerative or more congenial positions, and the more the Bureau is used the more useful it will be. Larger registration would make it more attractive to administrative officials, and if it were more attractive to them it would be more helpful to members.

### \$2700 — \$3300 — \$4000

Dear Professor Fitzhugh:  
Southeastern Louisiana College at Hammond, Louisiana, a young and growing institution approved this spring by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, needs some one to do the following work:

Teach two years of journalism. Sponsor the college paper and other publications such as the catalog and bulletins. Direct the publicity.

He should have the following qualifications:

Teaching ability.  
At least a master's degree or the equivalent.  
Good training in journalism.  
Some experience in managing publications.  
Ability to maintain pleasing relations with the public.  
Good appearance, manner, and diction.

The salary would range from \$2,700 to \$3,300 depending upon experience and qualifications, with prospect of an increase to \$4,000 in several years.

I hope to be in Washington at the Carlton or the Statler for the MLA meeting on December 27-30 and shall be happy to interview any person interested.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) D. Vickers

Head of the Dept. of Languages

The NEWS LETTER is now able to accept contributions slightly longer than 1000 words, but it does not encourage them.

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## BOOK NOTE

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## READING AND WRITING—II

(Continued from page 2, column 2)

sense of direct imitation. But I was insisting on a principle which seemed to be implicit in the Committee's report, namely, that good writing and good reading go hand in hand, with good thinking serving perhaps as their common denominator. The transfer from reading to writing is not an easy, mechanical one, but it is a very real phenomenon, as any practiced teacher of composition will testify. In an intangible, subtle sense, the model still performs an important function for anyone learning to write.

The problems still remain of clarifying the forms of discourse for the student, both in reading and in writing, and of developing happy techniques for teaching them. Who has not struggled to teach freshmen the need for an objective approach and acknowledgment of indebtedness to sources in straight exposition, the difference between originality and pedantry in research, or the difference between juvenile impressionism and valid criticism in the writing of a book review? These are close to the essentials of scientific and critical method (are they not?), yet they have been and should be, the business of the English teacher.

Where and how the principles of grammar and rhetoric, logic and criticism, can best be learned is a difficult question. The need for a separate course for this purpose is not self-evident, but the need for a teaching of these principles is. I have suggested that a systematic survey of these bases of clear thinking and good writing can perhaps best be woven into the fabric of the proposed two-year course. By introducing greater variety into the reading, we need sacrifice neither the high quality of material nor the continuity of humanistic tradition which has been proposed. On the contrary, such a measure might be just the step which would make possible such teaching of composition as will incorporate the best features of the old-fashioned grammar and rhetoric and the "new-fashioned" courses in expository writing.

Sholom J. Kahn  
Queens College

## WHY NOT JR. MEMBERS . . .

(Continued from page 1, column 3)

they can be honored by being accepted as the first group of students to be affiliated with the College English Association. They would like to know the advantages and expenses of such a privilege. Personally, I am sure that such

an affiliation would be beneficial to both the Association and student groups.

Yours truly,  
Paul M. Wheeler

Head of the English Dept.  
Winthrop College

The South Carolina College for Women

Comments from officers and directors follow:

"Professor Wheeler's letter makes a lot of sense to me. Why not print it in the N.L. and see what response it gets? There is no hurry, I think, so you could wait until opinion developed—one way or the other. I am really for it (on the Junior Membership basis), but don't see how it can be put through unless there is general understanding of it. I think the understanding will be general and maybe we don't even want to say Junior membership. The N.L. might ask for discussion."

"Professor Wheeler's inquiry whether undergraduate and graduate students of English may be allowed to affiliate with the Association is interesting and valuable. The word 'affiliation' suggests that such members might be admitted in a special and separate category of their own, and if this were done I think the work and influence of the Association would be affected in none but beneficial ways. We ought to keep the Association what it has always been, primarily a society of teachers; yet of course all good teachers recognize the perpetuation of their own kind as one of their main duties. Teachers and students alike would benefit by such partnership, such recognition of a common cause. I like this proposal decidedly."

"If any such idea were adopted, I think the Junior membership should be limited to students who intend to become teachers or scholars of English. Otherwise, you will spread into all kinds of vague literary groups."

"Professor Paul Wheeler's proposal for opening affiliate memberships in the CEA to college majors in English is an interesting one, and I have no too dogmatic feelings concerning it. The arguments in favor of this action are fairly obvious and clear. I am wondering, however, about the additional machinery it would involve for the Association and about the possibility of the affiliate members, out of the sheer work they would entail, becoming rather a distraction than a blessing."

"The CEA still needs to do a

first-rate job in improving teaching and scholarship. Perhaps it should confine itself to this one distinguished purpose. Some fellowship with the students in our colleges would be a blessing. If the students wanted to form their own organization and actually take care of the business side so that it did not get in your way or be an undue burden on you, the most cordial relations with such a group should surely be encouraged."

"I sympathize with Professor Wheeler's proposal, but really believe it is not very practical. At least I do not see how our present organization could undertake an ambitious plan beyond the present scope of CEA. I should think some help might be given without formal affiliation."

"Professor Paul H. Wheeler's general idea of a junior organization of graduate students and English majors sharing purposes with the CEA and affiliated with it sounds to me like a good one. With a membership of sufficient size and national representation, it might do a good deal toward developing a professional spirit, and it would undoubtedly strengthen the CEA. I fear, however, that the movement would be only sporadic. Here and there a few professors like Professor Wheeler, and groups of students like those at Winthrop, might get together. But I doubt that the idea would prove popular in the colleges of the country as a whole. I believe the CEA should be slow to offer encouragement of the prospect of affiliation until the junior movement could show some strength. I suggest that you put it up to Professor Wheeler and others with similar convictions to try out the idea with a considerable number of other colleges."

Graduate students teaching at least half time should be admitted. But graduate students teaching less than half time or not at all, and undergraduates merely expecting to teach, should not be admitted to regular membership and should not (except by special permission or invitation) ever attend our meetings, national, regional, or local. If they trooped in, they would damage our homogeneity and frankness.

On the other hand, the groups referred to in (3) should be allowed, or rather encouraged, to form organizations affiliated with and maintaining liaison with the CEA (e.g. they might receive the News Letter at \$1.00 annually). Although I deplore a too vocational

(Continued on next page)

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## WHY NOT JR. MEMBERS? . . .

(Continued from page 4)

spirit on the part of undergraduates, I deplore even more their subjection, via requirements, to the department, school, or college of Education. The more interest we can show in their preparation for the profession of teaching as such, the less they will come under the devitalizing influence of the Educationists. Here is a chance for a counter-offensive. As individuals, we should be ready to speak at meetings of these intending teachers, or serve on their committees, or attend as honorary members,

etc. So far as we are wanted, let's respond."

"Affiliation of honor undergraduates should be good for them and might help the Association. I suppose as much good would come of it as effort is put into it. Would it necessitate a lot of extra book-keeping, records, etc.? If that seems practicable, I am for it."

"I do believe there is a definite interest on the part of the undergraduates and graduate students in some kind of junior membership in the College English Association. I have talked with a number of the majors is the department, with a good cross-section of the graduate students, and all are interested in anything that will put them in closer touch with what is being done in undergraduate teaching over the country. All feel, or appear to feel, the need of a gesture of acceptance, however junior it may be, that is more real than the tacit acceptance as a major in English or as a graduate student. Even if the majority of English majors should never teach, such a membership will have brought them into closer juxtaposition with the problems of the academic world and every bit of that education helps."

## VIRGINIA MEETING . . .

(Continued from page 1, column 2)

demonstrated that the blind lead the blind and that the result, as shown in the writing of graduate students, of professors of literature, of lawyers, doctors, and men of affairs, seems often to become only a label of well-meaning sound without very much sense. A spirited discussion, in the course of which many more than had been expected bounded to the defence of "sound, old-fashioned" grammar, was climaxed by Joseph Vaughan, of the University of Virginia, who suggested in regard to the responsibility (secondary school versus college) for the teaching of English fundamentals that "While we argue over whose baby it is, the poor child is starving to death."

Francis P. Gaines, President of Washington and Lee University, spoke briefly at the luncheon meeting, followed by John Cook Wyllie, Curator of Rare Books at the University of Virginia, who pointed out both the abundance of literary source materials in the Virginia, North Carolina, and West Virginia area and also the failure of teachers in the same areas to utilize these materials in their teaching and research.

Newman Ivey White, of Duke University, introduced Norman Foerster as principal speaker at the afternoon session. Mr. Foerster spoke on the subject of "The Teacher of Great Literature." College teachers today, he said, are not trained to cope with such courses in general literature as those proposed by the Harvard Report and the report of the College English Curriculum committee (see *News Letter of the College English Association*, March, 1946). Brought up in a tradition of English literary history, linguistics, and historical research, they are not able to read properly in any language (often not even in their own), are unfamiliar with "great books" even in translation, know little if anything of literary criticism, and nothing of philosophy and fine arts. He proposed a revision of curriculum for graduate study which would include, among other things, an "honest" language requirement and a reduction of time spent in the minutiae of historical research.

At the business meeting of the organization it was resolved to submit a petition to the Department of Education of the State of Virginia asking that the required training in English for high school teachers be raised from six to twelve session hours.

Officers for 1946-1947 were elected as follows: Fitzgerald Flournoy, Washington and Lee University, president; Mary Vincent Long, Hollins College, and Margaret Carrigan, Bethany College, vice-presidents; and Martha Dabney Jones, St. Mary's Junior College, secretary-treasurer. Past-presidents Joseph Vaughan and Lewis Leary were appointed ex-officio members of an executive committee.

Lewis Leary  
Duke University

## Middle Atlantic Meeting

On November 16 Catholic University was host to the first fall meeting of the Middle Atlantic Group since 1942. Professor Francis E. Litz presided.

Provocative papers were read by Professor Don Cameron Allen of The Johns Hopkins University and by Professor Craig LaDriere of Catholic University. Dr. Allen gave an explication *de texte*, of Donne's "Hymn to God my God, in my sickness", discussing, in brilliant fashion, the circumstances of composition, the structure and meaning of the verses and the worth of the poem as a whole. A group of poems relating to trees, including Hopkins' "Binsey Poplars" and Housman's "Lovell of Trees" were read and discussed

fully by Dr. LaDriere whose approach was through a conception of the nature of the thing to be judged, with special emphasis upon the structure of meaning and the structure of sound.

Another meeting will be held in the spring, the date, topic, and speakers to be announced in the near future.

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## DO THEY SPEAK . . .

(Continued from page 1, column 1)

colleges; twenty-seven cooperate with state universities; thirty-six within the school systems. Ninety-six had no special remedial courses or plans; twenty-four had special classes in remedial reading; two had special courses in speech; eight had special "after school" courses for those deficient; thirty-three replied that they left the matter up to the individual teacher. Three recommended summer school for those whose English was poor.

Teachers in these high schools report teaching an average of 153 pupils daily in an average of five classes. Some, it is true, teach 100 in four classes; others, however, teach 220 students in five classes. One suspects that the North Central Association requirements of 150 students as a normal teaching load prompted many to state that that was the "average" enrollment. In report after report, however, are statements that though the average is 150 students "the last few years, I have taught 169" or "at present, because of our population increase, I am teaching 220." Then come the statements we have heard too often: "In addition, I have a home room and a study hall," thus making seven full periods a day! Others report teaching five classes, being in charge of a study hall, and then assisting with debate or the newspaper or dramatics or the annual. Luckily a few teachers (only three) report that students help them grade themes. One hundred and twenty-three report that the English teaching load is heavier than that in foreign language and in sciences.

When asked what teachers considered critical English problems in the pupil's transition from high school to college, from junior to high school, and from elementary to junior high school, 155 stated "lack of development of tool skills, reading, writing, speaking, listening," "lack of development of critical thinking," and "inadequate training in grammar."

As one looks over the courses of study and the comments, it is apparent that there are some excellent courses in language arts and some splendid teaching, but too often vagueness and lack of purpose characterize much of the planning. It seems, too, that much of the teaching is correction rather than instruction.

Many courses show that there is no real progression of subject matter in terms of "ascending value or increasing differences." Some courses show lack of under-

standing the terms **grammar, formal grammar, syntax, and rhetoric**. One finds listed for example, under grammar study, "parts of speech," "outlining," "spelling," "sentence usage," and "vocabulary." Few courses show writing practice in step with the study of grammar. Since many of the same errors appear as minimum essentials in each grade, the chances are that writing was occasional and the correction of it superficial. With teaching loads as high as they are and with the extra duties given English teachers, it is not surprising that too few themes are assigned, that often teachers' corrections are made hurriedly, and that often the student is not required to rewrite papers or correct the errors in his papers. This same heavy teaching schedule makes conferences almost an impossibility; one questions how many of the after school remedial classes really are held. No English teacher should be obliged to assume the many responsibilities assigned her in our schools.

Two hundred and thirty colleges sent answers to the questionnaire: complete answers to the questionnaire were received from seventy-nine colleges and universities and forty states.

Of these colleges, fifty-four state they have no programs of articulation with high schools; eighteen report that the universities have programs of articulation in which they work with high schools; seven report that there are articulation programs in which they work with high schools through the state English associations, through the state universities or through the state offices of public instruction. Forty-one schools state that they have special remedial classes for students whose training is inadequate; two have special clinics for those not adequately prepared; three have remedial reading classes; eight, through tutors, give special aid; five have special conferences for those needing aid; three merely fail students whose English is weak; and twenty-two say they have no plan for aiding students not adequately prepared in English.

Teaching loads in College English classes show a marked difference from those in high schools. Three universities report teaching schedules three to nine hours weekly; forty-one report schedules of nine to twelve hours; eight, of twelve to fifteen hours; and nine, of fourteen to nineteen hours. The number of students in a freshman English class ranges from eighteen to thirty-five, with an average of

twenty-four. Sixty colleges and universities report that English schedules are lighter than those in science and foreign languages.

When asked what they considered critical problems in English, forty-five stated the student's lack of ability to read; forty-five, the student's inability to write well; twenty, the student's lack of vocabulary; twenty-nine, little knowledge of grammar; twenty-seven, incoherent thinking; eighteen, the attitude that slovenliness in speech and writing was nothing to be ashamed of; seventeen, lack of critical judgment in students; and forty-eight, lack of knowledge of syntax. One professor reported that he found "no critical problems to generalize about." "The main problem," he added, "is to encourage the student to think independently and to hope he has already learned to read and write."

Almost every college and university feels grave concern because students as a whole are not proficient in the language arts. The remedy for the situation, many see in remedial courses in the freshman year; yet doubtless some of these same students had remedial courses in high school in the tenth or twelfth year. As the same types or errors that are listed in high school are listed as errors in college, one suspects that the college remedial courses will not prove any more effective than those did in high school. With lighter teaching schedules, teachers in college should be able to give individual help to students; yet statements like "This is a light teaching load in order that the professor may have more time for research" or "We have a nine hour teaching schedule in order that instructors may devote time to their graduate studies" occur frequently enough for one to question whether the student who suffered as a result of his high school teacher's heavy schedule may not also suffer because of the professor's interest in research. A few colleges, it is true, are genuinely interested in working with high schools for a better articulated language arts program. The great majority though far from complacent about the student's inability to express his ideas coherently, have done little to get at the source of the trouble. Furthermore, once the student has passed or failed his Freshman English course, college professors seem to do little except lament his ignorance in use of the spoken and written word. There is urgent need for high school teachers and college professors to cooperate

rather than to damn High School English.

In conclusion, I believe that many courses of study should be revised to permit a steady progression in teaching the structure and function of language. In the words of Professor Clarence D. Thorpe, "Let us avoid the confusion of a multiplicity of goals. Instead of talking in terms of fifteen hundred aims let us limit ourselves, say to competence in conveying ideas, observance of the decencies in expressing ideas . . ." This will demand a clear understanding of the relationships of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and sentence structure. Word study, no longer taught in some schools, should be reintroduced. Students should acquire the habit of speaking and writing sentences carried through to meaningful completion; they should have respect for phrases and clauses in relationship to what they modify; "they should be taught the manners of discourse: the right verb and the right noun usage"; they should be taught to speak and write coherently. There should be **definite, specific** courses from kindergarten through college. Through cooperation of teachers, there should emerge a uniform nomenclature in grammar, uniform symbols and abbreviations, and a clear definition of minimum standards. There should be a tightening of grading in all courses and a refusal to give passing marks to written work which does not reach minimum requirements. There is grave doubt whether courses in dramatics, journalism, and the like should be accepted as substitutes for required English.

Regardless of the type of curriculum proposed, unless teaching loads in English in junior and senior high schools are lightened there can be little hope of our students speaking, reading, and writing better than they do. I realize, of course, that there is a critical shortage of teachers in our school systems, but I believe that important factors contributing to that shortage are excessive teaching loads and the resultant inability of the most conscientious teachers to do the thoroughly professional jobs their pupils need. I realize also that to ask for lighter teaching loads means not only employing more teachers but also an increased school budget. I believe, however, that this additional expense is essential in a democratic society where each member should be educated to speak, read, and write well.

Amanda M. Ellis,  
Colorado College.



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